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Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Identical letters dated 16 March 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On Sunday, 14 March 2004, two Palestinian terrorists perpetrated a double homicide bombing at the Port of Ashdod, killing 10 Israelis and wounding 18, one critically. The assailants used high-grade plastic explosive devices containing ball bearings to inflict maximum pain and injury on the victims. The force of the bombs, which exploded approximately 100 yards apart, caused the roofs of numerous port office buildings to collapse and threw many of the victims a long distance from the blast. The murdered were Gil Abutbul, 31, Dan Asulin, 51, Avi Avraham, 34, Zion Dahan, 30, Mazal Marzianno, 30, and Moris Tubul, 30, all of Ashdod; Ophir Damari, 31, and Moshe Hendler, 29, both of Rechovot; Avi Suissa, 55, of Kiryat Malachi; and Pinchas Avraham Zilberman, 46, of Tel Aviv. Hamas and Yasser Arafat's own Fatah Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack and identified the bombers as Nabil Ibrahim Masoud and Muhammad Zahil Salem, both 18 and residents of Jabalya in the northern Gaza Strip.

The homicide bombers exploded Sunday just several hundred metres from a cluster of bromine tanks. Had the terrorists succeeded in detonating the bombs closer to the tanks, the effects could have been even more devastating, with poisonous gases spreading to a 1.5-kilometre radius, killing many more people.

The terrorist attack in Ashdod follows a number of terrorist attempts that were averted by Israel's defence forces. These include a triple suicide bombing planned by Yasser Arafat's Fatah Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which was averted when one of the three bombers, a Palestinian woman from Schem (Nablus), was intercepted by Israeli security personnel. The other two members of her cell were planning to board a public commuter bus in central Israel and detonate their explosives. The female

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would-be bomber was instructed to wait, dressed up as a volunteer of Magen David Adom (Israel's emergency medical service), for the arrival of rescue forces and to set off her explosive belt among them. This plan of using medical attire as a disguise in order to target rescue workers tending to the injured after a terrorist attack is a horrific demonstration of the depravity of the terrorism that Israel is compelled to confront on a daily basis.

These attacks further demonstrate the brazen unwillingness of the Palestinian leadership to fulfil its counter-terrorist obligations, in violation of the most basic obligations of international law, human rights, Security Council resolutions and the road map. In his remarks yesterday to the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said,

> "The Palestinian leadership has done nothing; it has not carried out arrests, it has not fought against terrorism, it has not confiscated weapons and has not stopped incitement in media, schools and mosques. On the one hand, Fatah takes responsibility for terror attacks, and on the other, they condemn in English the attack. The Palestinians must understand that the only way to peace is to battle terror and incitement."

Israel calls upon the international community to make clear to the Palestinian leadership and to those regimes sponsoring terrorism in the region its absolute rejection of terrorist tactics and its acceptance of nothing less than the complete dismantling of terrorist organizations and relentless efforts to prevent terrorism and bring its perpetrators and supporters to justice in accordance with international law, signed agreements between the parties and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1373 (2001). Only a united and uncompromising stand against the perpetrators of these crimes — in all international and domestic forums — can bring an end to the Palestinian strategy of terrorism and violence and make peace between the peoples of the region possible. Rewards for the continuing Palestinian policy of intransigence and terror, in the form of political concessions or the toleration of one-sided initiatives in the organs of the United Nations can only embolden the terrorists and undermine efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful settlement.

I submit the present letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism launched in September 2000, which document the crimes for which the terrorists and their supporters must be held fully accountable.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 156 and 67, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ambassador Arye **Mekel**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.